

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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SUBJ: ELECTION AFTERMATH

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SUMMARY: SPECULATION IS RAMPANT IN BANGKOK ABOUT THE MAKEUP OF THE NEW COALITION AS TALKS CONTINUE BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, SOCIAL NATIONALIST AND THAI NATION PARTIES. KHUKRIT PRAMOT ANNOUNCES HE WILL RESIGN AS SOCIAL ACTION PARTY LEADER. VOTER TURNOUT NATIONWIDE WAS JUST UNDER 50 PERCENT AND IN BANGKOK 29 PERCENT. ONLY 43 PERCENT OF INCUMBENTS RE-ELECTED. END SUMMARY.

1. SPECUALTION IS RAMPANT IN BANGKOK ABOUT THE MAKEUP OF THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE SERIOUS TALKS NOW IN PROGRESS BETWEEN THE DEMOCRATS AND THE MAJOR PARTIES THAT MIGHT JOIN THE COALITION--THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (SJP), THE THAI NATION PARTY (TNP) AND THE SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTY (SNP). NO ONE REALLY KNOWS AT THIS TIME WHAT THE COALITION WILL FINALLY LOOK LIKE. DEMOCRAT PARTY LEADER
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SENI PRAMOT TOLD REPORTERS ON APRIL 4 THAT THE GOVERNMENT

SHOULD BE FORMED WITHIN TWO WEEKS. IN THE APRIL 7 BANGKOK POST HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING "I CANNOT SAY ANYTHING AT THIS STAGE ABOUT WHAT PARTIES WILL JOIN US IN THE COALITION. OUR CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL MEET WEDNESDAY MORNING (APRIL 7). DEMOCRAT MP'S WILL MEET FRIDAY (APRIL 9)."

2. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT HAS STATED TO PRESS HE WILL RESIGN AS LEADER OF THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) TO ALLOW AN ELECTED SAP MP TO HEAD THE PARTY. FINANCE MINISTER BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN AND JUSTICE MINISTER BUNTHENG THONGSAWAT BOTH DEPUTY PARTY LEADERS, ARE THE LEADING CANDIDATES TO REPLACE KHUKRIT. KHUKRIT INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NOT REQUEST A RECOUNT IN DUSIT, WHERE HE LOST BY 700 VOTES. HE WAS UNDECIDED ABOUT WHAT HE WOULD DO AFTER LEAVING OFFICE BUT HE IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD NOT LEAVE POLITICAL LIFE COMPLETELY. HE LEFT OPEN THE QUESTION WHETHER HE MIGHT RUN IN A BY-ELECTION IF ONE IS HELD IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

3. ACCORDING TO THE LATEST INFORMATION FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, THE ELECTION RESULTS REPORTED IN REF A STAND EXCEPT FOR TWO CHANGES. A RECOUNT OF VOTES IN THE THIRD ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF KORAT PROVINCE REVERSED THE POSITION OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH PLACE FINISHERS, RESULTING IN SAP LOSING A SEAT (DOWN TO 45) AND SNP WINNING ONE (UP TO 8).

4. AS EXPECTED (REF B) ONLY ABOUT HALF OF THE 20.0 MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS WENT TO THE POLLS ON APRIL. ACCORDING TO UNOFFICIAL RESULTS. THIS WAS SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN THE 47 PERCENT TURNOUT IN 1975. IN BANGKOK ONLY 29 PERCENT VOTED, ACCORDING TO FIGURES RELEASED ON APRIL 6 BY THE GOVERNOR OF BANGKOK. THIS COMPARES WITH THE 34 PERCENT VOTE IN THE JANUARY 26, 1975, ELECTION AND THE 13 PERCENT TURNOUT IN THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF AUGUST, 1975.

5. INCUMBENTS DID POORLY IN THE APRIL 4 ELECTIONS. ONLY 105 OUT OF THE 243 INCUMBENTS WON RE-ELECTION. THE APRIL 7 NATION REPORTS THAT ONLY 22 OF 66 MP'S THAT SWITCHED PARTIES WON RE-ELECTION. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY FIGURES ONLY 9 OF THE 28 NEW SAP MEMBERS WON RE-ELECTION. AMONG THOSE DEFEATED WERE MANY CONTROVERSIAL MP'S KHUKRIT UNCLASSIFIED

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RECRUITED INTO THE PARTY, SUCH AS SURIN THEPKANCHANA, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY; CHAISIRI RUANGKANCHANASET, DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMERCE; AND SUNIRAT TELAN. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CARETAKER CABINET DEFEATED WERE DEPUTY PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER UTHAI CHUNHACHAN (TNP); DEPUTY INDUSTRY MINISTER, THANET IASAKUN (SNP); DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PRATHUANG KHAMPRAKOP (SOCIAL AGRARIAN); DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER COL. PRAKOP PRAYUNPHOKKARAT (TNP); DEPUTY MINISTER OF

COMMUNICATIONS, PRATHUAN ROMMAYAN (TNP); DEPUTY FINANCE MINISTER PRAPHATPHONG WETCHACHIWA (SAP); AND DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER SUWAN THANAKANYA (SJP). ALSO DEFEATED WAS FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF TNPD, GENERAL PHOT PHEKKANAN.

6. COMMENT: THE PRESENT MOOD IN BANGKOK IS ONE OF QUIET SATISFACTION AT THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION. THE SHOCK OF THE SIZE OF THE DEMOCRAT VICTORY HAS WORN OFF. (ACCORDING TO A NATION REPORT, SENI PRAMOT BELIEVED THAT THE DEMOCRATS WOULD WIN ABOUT 80 SEATS COUNTRYWIDE AND 24 IN BANGKOK.) THIS MOOD IS BEST REFLECTED IN A BANGKOK POST EDITORIAL OF APRIL 6 WHOSE FIRST PARAGRAPH READS: "SINCE NOBODY...WAS READY TO GIVE THE THAI PEOPLE CREDIT FOR ANY GOOD SENSE IN THIS ELECTION, THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF PHENOMENAL. NOT PHENOMENAL IN THE REVOLUTIONARY SENSE OR IN CHOOSING THE WISEST OR THE RICHEST OR THE MOST VOCIFEROUS--BUT PHENOMENAL IN VOTING FOR THE PARTY WHICH APPARENTLY WOULD BE GIVING THE MOST PEACE OF MIND."
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